

**THE RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARKETING COMMITTEE MEETING**

April 28, 2009

A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority Board of Commissioners was held on April 28, 2009 pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center Boardroom, One Sabin Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Board members present were Committee Chairman, Dale Venturini, Commissioners Dave Duffy, Jeff Hirsh, Paul MacDonald and Jason Fowler.

Also in attendance were Jim McCarvill, Kim Keough and Betty Sullivan, RICCA; Tim Muldoon, John McGinn, Arlene Oliva and Debbie Tuton, RICC; Larry Lepore, Cheryl Cohen, Lisa Coelho, and Jodi Duclos, Dunkin' Donuts Center; Martha Sheridan and Neil Schriever, PWCVB; Steve Habl and Patti Neves, VMA; Tom Crocker, Sportservice; Evan Smith, Anne Roberts and Jenny Pitt, Newport CVB and Eileen Smith, recording secretary.

Ms. Venturini called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM. Ms. Venturini asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March meeting. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Hirsh and seconded by Mr. Fowler it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the March meeting.

DUNKIN' DONUTS CENTER

Ms. Venturini asked Ms. Cohen to begin her presentation. Ms. Cohen was pleased to report that the Dunkin' Donuts Center enjoyed their highest gross income numbers for both the Harlem Globetrotters and the WWE. Ms. Cohen also reported that ticket sales for the Circus are running high. Ms. Cohen stated that for WWE every seat was sold, even the press box and some seats behind the stage curtain. Ms. Cohen reported that the Boston Pops will be doing a Christmas Concert at the Dunk on December 12th. She said that an e-blast will be going out to announce the event. Ms. Cohen reported that there has been a great deal of publicity for the Circus. She noted that the elephant brunch will take place on Thursday at 11:00 am and will be covered by Channel 10. Ms. Cohen said that Barbara Morse Silva will be highlighting healthy eating for elephants. Discussions took place regarding the P Bruins. Mr. McCarvill asked if we have any opportunities to advertise in Worcester during the P Bruins vs Worcester Hockey games. Ms. Cohen said that we do. Ms. Cohen reported that we have a new advertising contract with Ananke IT Solutions but lost our contract with Napa Genuine Auto Parts. Ms. Cohen noted that the sales staff is working on procuring sponsorships for the Boston Pops Concert. Ms. Cohen said that advertising contracts with INSKIP, Care New England, Macy's Textron, Blue Cross, Lifespan. Cardi's Furniture and Tiffany & Co. are

being discussed. Ms. Cohen reported that sales of the party suites and the restaurant are going very well. Ms. Cohen noted that the party suites are available for select performances of the Circus, Demi Lovato Concert and the Boston Pops Holiday Concert. She also noted that there will be 90 tables on the floor available for the Boston Pops. Ms. Cohen presented a list of publications that printed articles and the media coverage that the Circus received. She said that it the objective of the sales staff to maximize public awareness of the events at the Dunkin' Donuts Center.

CONVENTION CENTER

Ms. Venturini recognized Mr. McGinn and asked that he address the Committee. Mr. McGinn presented the Convention Center's progress in meeting the goals of the 2009 Marketing Plan. Mr. McGinn reminded the Committee that last year the Convention Center enjoyed the second best revenue year ever. He said that the Convention Center is down approximately 6% from 2008 with two months to go. Mr. McGinn said that the staff is working hard to close the gap. Mr. McGinn reported that on new prospects for the Convention Center. He noted that three of the four prospects are in the food shows. Mr. McGinn said that Ms. Oliva has had some success in this area. Mr. McGinn reported that C&S Wholesale Grocers attended a site tour on March 20th and there will be a food tasting on May 5th. He said that a final decision will be made after the food tasting. WB Mason Annual Sales Meeting is looking at the Convention Center for their event in

October 2010 or 2011. Mr. McGinn said that a site tour is scheduled for June 2009. Mr. McGinn said that we are holding dates for the United Natural Foods Northeast Show tentatively set for May 2010 and Bozzuto's Incorporated Trade Show was in for a site tour of the Convention Center on March 25th. Mr. McGinn reported that new prospects in the meetings market include Adidas for a meeting in October 2009. He said that the client expects to make a decision by the end of April. United Cheer and Dance Foundation is looking to expand their program across the country and utilize all SMG facilities.

Mr. McGinn noted that Cheer and Dance competitions have become a valuable source of income for the Convention Center. Mr. McGinn stated that a Westin Hotel lead, Insight Forums, is interested in date in October/November of 2009. Mr. McGinn reported that the Big East – Joint Football Clinic will bring in representatives from many conferences (ACC, MAC, Big East, Big Ten) for football officials education. He stated that the clinic will take place in July 2010. Mr. McGinn thanked Mr. MacDonald for bringing the DaVinci Center Awards banquet to the facility. He also thanked Mr. MacDonald for his assistance with attracting union functions. Mr. MacDonald said that he appreciates what a great facility and dedicated staff that we have at the Convention Center. He said that other unions will be contacting the Convention Center in the near future. Mr. Muldoon also thanked Mr. MacDonald and reported that Paul had helped by talking to the building and business trades. Mr. McGinn reported on tentative events. Mr. Duffy encouraged Mr. McGinn to find more appropriate wording or precise definitions for tentative events. Mr.

Duffy recognized that Mr. McGinn was more enthusiastic today than he has been in a long time. Mr. McGinn said that things were looking up.

VMA

Steve Hahl introduced Patti Neves to the group. Mr. Hahl reported that the VMA is winding down for the season. He said that the Ballet had performed their last show for the year and that the Philharmonic was coming to a close. Mr. Hahl reported that he is working with the hotel and restaurant to package a Philharmonic performance with a room and diner. Mr. Hahl noted that he is looking into the bus group business. He said that the bus companies arrange for acts to perform at the theater and we would provide lunch or breakfast at the Convention Center and the bus company would provide transportation to the theater for the show. Mr. Schriever stated that there may be a food and beverage opportunity for the Convention Center with the motor coach traveler. Mr. Hahl reported that Ms. Neves had reached out to area colleges and universities to let them know that the theater is available for special events. He said that the Providence Chamber of Commerce will hold a meeting in the facility. Mr. Hahl said that collateral is being shared with local theaters such as the GAMM and Trinity Rep. Mr. Duffy asked if there has been much success in booking other events. Mr. McCarvill noted that Hal Holbrook will be performing his Mark Twain show. Mr. Hahl said that there are some prospects. Mr. McCarvill asked how many

graduations have been booked and if that was an increase from last year. Mr. Hahl said that there has been a 20% increase over last year. Mr. Hahl noted that Kim Keough and his staff, with the cooperation of the Ballet and Temple Restaurant had put together a mother daughter tea and ballet performance. He noted that they had worked very hard distributing pamphlets to dance schools all over the area. Ms. Keough stated that the event was lovely but attendance was low. Mr. MacDonald said that it must be depressing to have so many empty seats. Ms. Keough stated that the Ballet gives away a good number of tickets and it may be time for them to stop that practice. She said that they need to value their own product. Mr. Fowler asked if Mr. Hahl had considered holding jazz events. Mr. Hahl said that the theater would be a good venue for jazz. Mr. Lepore noted that Steve Marra is interested in discussing the potential with us.

PROVIDENCE/WARWICK CVB

Mr. Schriever reported that he had positive things to present. He said that the City is trending well. Mr. Schriever stated that although definite bookings for the Convention Center are down slightly to last year the associated room nights are up. Mr. Schriever reported that definite bookings for the Complex include the Boston Church of Christ, the Department of the Army Spirit of America and Titleist Performance Institute. Mr. Schriever reported that the sales staff is working diligently to close tentative pieces of business. Mr. Schriever noted some of the organizations that are prospective

clients include Mary Kay, Inc. that is looking at March 2011 and 2012. He said that Front Row Productions, United First Financial and Roche are interested in dates in August and September 2009. Mr. Schriever noted that the trend continues to be short term commitments. He stated that meeting planners are being very cautious in this economy. Mr. Schriever reported that there were several site inspections during the month. He said that the folks from Mathworks had done a walk through of the Convention Center, the Westin and the Hilton for their Annual Sales Kick-off to be held in January 2010. C&S Wholesale Grocers visited the Convention Center and area hotels and the US Lacrosse Association was here and signed a contract for their 2009 meeting and they are considering a multi year commitment. Mr. Schriever reported that the staff has attended numerous trade shows and hosted client events during the month. Mr. Schriever suggested that a date be set for the next Athletic Directors luncheon. Mr. Duffy inquired if the Sports Council was still in operation. Ms. Sheridan said that at this time, due to a lack of funds the Sports Council is not very visible anything. Mr. Duffy asked if the legislature is aware of what the CVB has accomplished. Ms. Sheridan stated that the tourism industry is in the process of educating the legislature and the public on the importance of tourism to the State. Ms. Sheridan reported that Providence is in the running for one of "America's Favorite Cities" from Travel & Leisure Magazine. She encouraged everyone to visit the web site and vote for Providence.

NEWPORT CVB

Evan Smith congratulated Ms. Venturini for being a recipient of an award from Providence Business News. Mr. Smith introduced his guests from Newport. Mr. Smith noted that the economic downturn has had an impact on the City's ADR. He said that it is not a bad result because in the past Newport's high ADR was prohibitive for many groups. Mr. Smith reported that he and Martha Sheridan had contacted Senator Reed's office to make him aware of the impact that restricting business travel would have on the State. He said that the publicity over companies that received taxpayer bailouts and then held elaborate events has made any travel suspect. Mr. Smith reported that Senator Paiva-Weed is working on ways to save the Providence/Newport Fast Ferry. He said that there is a 1/2 million dollar gap in funding that we are all looking to fill. Mr. Smith invited the Marketing Committee to hold their next meeting in Newport. Ms. Venturini checked her calendar and said that Wednesday, May 20th would be a good day to visit Newport.

Ms. Venturini asked Mr. McCarvill to update the Committee on his meeting with the news editor of the Providence Journal. Mr. McCarvill explained his conversation with the editor and noted that we do not expect the Projo to be the Chamber of Commerce Newsletter but would like them to be fair, honest and accurate in their reporting. He noted that he had pointed out several instances in the March 31st piece that were inaccurate or misleading. Mr. McCarvill said that he did not anticipate any change in the way our story was

presented.

Ms. Venturini asked Ms. Keough to address the Committee. Ms. Keough distributed a draft copy of the Authority's Annual Report. She noted that the report was being printed and would be distributed within a few weeks. Ms. Keough reported that Nail would begin the discovery phase of the web design next week. She said that there is discussion of indemnity between Nail and Mr. Leach. Mr. Duffy said that indemnity should not be an issue. Ms. Keough was pleased to note that Nail has been doing Pro Bono work for the RI Community Food Bank. Ms. Keough reported that earned media for the quarter was \$197,000. Ms. Keough stated that she has great response for the Rhode Show which has covered the Circus, Midget Car Racing and the Providence Roller Derby. Ms. Keough stated that the Mother/Daughter Tea was a disappointment but the bigger issue is with the Ballet. Mr. Habi said that getting the Ballet healthy gets the VMA healthy. Ms. Keough noted that it will take a lot of work to get the Ballet to recognize that they have a great product and should not be giving it away. People expect to be given free admission and that reduces the value of the performance. Ms. Keough reported that there will be a meeting with Arthur Parks from Providence College to discuss ways to increase attendance next season.

Ms. Venturini asked for a motion to adjourn. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Hirsh and seconded by Mr. Fowler it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn at 1:50 pm